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ABSTRACT

The term "Regional Standard English" should refer to any kind of English spoken by educated individuals in a particular region. Vernacular is spoken by individuals with little education. Sociolinguistics as a field embraces ethnography of communication, social coding, societal analysis, social-psychological analysis and anthropoloty, all of which avenues of research are pursued by noted linguistic theorists. These strands may be unified into a "pandialectical model of sociolinguistic research." Early work in the field isolated vernaculars, identified patterns of language choices, and constructed rules governing variability. Variation within a language or between languages can be understood as a continuum within which a speaker moves and chooses. Notions of language restrictiveness and elaborateness were seen to be independent of intellectual capacity. Research into southwest English must consider Mexican-American English, Spanish, and bilingualism. Research should study sociolinguistic perspectives investigated elsewhere and identify pandialectical elements that may be applied to the southwest to construct a pandialectical model to trigger research. Issues to be examined include: (1) identification of vernaculars, (2) the nature of stylistic shifting, (3) description of speech communities, (4) description of variability features through variable rules, and (5) the presence of cross-cultural biases. (CHK)

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# RESEARCH IN SOUTHWESTERN ENGLISH AND THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE: THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM A NEWCOMER TO TEXAS

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It is obvious that, except for written English, the whole notion of "Standard English," if usable at all, can hardly refer to any uniform speech variety, since educated speakers from all over the country vary in the extent to which regional or even nonEnglish elements emerge from their speech. Similarly, the "Standard English" spoken in the Southwest displays the full spectrum of possibilities ranging, at one end, from an American koine to varieties with heavy regional or nonEnglish substrata. Therefore, if the term "Regional Standard English" is to be used at all with reference to the Southwest, it should carry only geographic and not linguistic or dialectological implications. In other words, it should merely refer to the kind, any kind, of English spoken by educated individuals in the geographic area that we call the Southwest.

Vernacular speech, on the other hand, is, by definition, not standardized and its extent of variation assumes at times unmanageable or almost unmanageable proportions. Regional nonstandards of this kind would comprise the full gamut of regional options but, at the same time, also such varieties as the southwestern Black English vernacular, Mexican-American English, German English, etc., all these being varieties spoken by individuals exposed to little, if any, education or by others who, although educated, have succeeded in retaining the home language despite their exposure to education. If, in view of all this diversity, there is

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any way of organizing it in a meaningful way, we will have to view non-standard English in terms of a series of criss-crossing patterns, each of which consists of a continuum of stylistic options ranging--in Stewart's terms--from "basilect" to "acrilect" (Stewart 1969:52).

We have argued a great deal as to whether sociolinguistics is actually a new discipline or whether we are merely approaching old disciplines from a new angle. Kjolseth from the University of Colorado has made his point defending the former and Dell Hymes from the University of Pennsylvania supporting the latter. I do not know whether it really matters as long as we are taking care of what in the past was unattended by linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, and social psychologists. The crux of the matter, however, seems to be that "sociolinguistics" does not mean the same to everyone who concerns himself with this field. As a matter of fact, it has one meaning for Labov and another for Hymes; it has one for Bernstein and another for Fishman; it has one for Lambert and another for Grimshaw. Because of the large number of scholars from different fields who all call themselves sociolinguists, this multiplicity of meanings hardly surprises us but it seems to be our responsibility now as educators to bring together the various trends or perspectives and to determine the exact meaning of "sociolinguistics."

Let me outline, very briefly, some of the perspectives that have emerged and the ways by which the findings in each more narrowly definable field contribute to sociolinguistics as a whole. Following here the same order as before, we might characterize these perspectives by saying that Labov has moved in his research from the linguistic considerations to the interpretation of social context, whereas Hymes, in his

concern for the ethnography of communication, has proceeded the opposite way, that is, from the analysis of the speech community to the linguistic phenomena that may, or may not, substantiate the prior findings. Bernstein's social coding system contrasts also, to some extent, with Fishman's societal analysis. Restrictedness and elaborateness seem to involve some degree of individual determination, whereas Fishman's sociolinguistic concepts describe the individual as a pawn on the societal chessboard. Finally, Lambert's interest in attitudes and motivation reflect the social-psychological side of sociolinguistics, whereas Grimshaw's recent development shows the extent to which anthropology and the new brand of linguistics address themselves to very similar issues.

The preceding statements do not offer a comprehensive listing of supporting fields, nor is the work of any of the mentioned scholars wholly compartmentalizable, as seems to be the case here. Rather, my statements have attempted to single out the major perspectives within the field. Therefore, instead of thinking in terms of a sociolinguistic slant to a variety of disciplines, as some have done, I feel more inclined to think of the field, with Kjolseth, as a novel discipline, a composite discipline, so to say. In effect, all the perspectives to which I have briefly referred earlier--and still more--make up this new discipline and we can develop true sociolinguistic thinking and implement innovative sociolinguistic research only if we actually envision the field along all these lines. In other words, we seem to have come to a point, in the brief history of sociolinguistically oriented studies, where we must bring together the oftentimes divergent trends and unify them within one single scholarly field. I would like to call this unification the "Pandialectal Model of Sociolinguistic Research."

A pandialectal model of sociolinguistic research. Whether because of practical needs or because of theoretical concerns (Hymes 1972: 314), sociolinguistic research got underway in the late sixties, triggered by Labov's 1966 study The social stratification of English in New York City and Shuy's and his associates' 1967 report A study of social dialects in Detroit. The methodology developed by the cited investigators had aimed at the isolation and identification of Black vernacular speech because (1) nonaudio-monitored speech seemed to reveal the greatest possible regularity and (2) a relatively few samples of recorded speech allowed for the identification of a fairly large number of significant features (Labov 1972:240). By the beginning of the present decade, sociolinguistic research had increased to such an extent that scholars were already beginning to gather together the results of many individual projects and to suggest, if not a complete Black English grammar, a reasonably comprehensive description of the Black vernacular. The progress in the field, moreover, had induced some investigators in New York City to expand their inquiries to include speakers of Puerto Rican English, but with the same objective in mind, i.e., that of identifying the speech of individuals when unguarded in their speech, that is, when performing the smallest possible number of stylistic changes (Labov 1972:208).

The isolation of vernaculars and the identification of fluctuating patterns of choices caused by various contextual factors had only been a first step. Labov and his associates had realized from the very beginning that the concern for and the interest in parole should not mean the refusal of the level of abstraction and formalism achieved by the supporters of langue (Labov 1972:187). Hence, the isolation of the Black

vernacular now required the formulation of rules capable of specifying the variability found in the samples and of accounting for the factors that conditioned this diversity. Variable rules were then constructed with such an objective in mind, first, on the basis of the more limited number of data gathered by Labov and, later, within the framework of Sankoff's quantitative paradigm. Independently from this approach, De Camp, on one hand, and Stolz and Bills, on the other, were suggesting a different, equally formal procedure to deal with variability whereby implicational statements were expressed in the form of scalograms, a technique that is presently gaining increasing acceptance as a result of the work of Legum and Elliott, Bailey, and others. Finally, attempts have recently been made by Fasold to combine the two approaches into a compromise formula whose future still seems to be undecided.

It has mainly been the contribution of creolists like De Camp and Stewart to help us understand the nature of stylistic changes. The variation occurring within a single language or in the transition from one dialect or language to the other is understood far better in terms of a continuum such that the speaker moves forth and back within a given range as he chooses the variables that linguistic or nonlinguistic factors may suggest to him. Even though Stewart's terms "basilect" and "acrilect" (Stewart 1969:52) seem to refer more specifically to situations dealing with certain speakers of the Black community, a parallel dichotomy can actually be used in describing the verbal behavior of any speaker.

Basil Bernstein, the British sociologist, seems to have been the first to suggest that the speaking styles of some individuals are elaborate and those of others are restricted. Since the former are often

characteristic of the socioeconomically underprivileged class and the latter of the upper middle class, Bernstein's social coding system was first wrongly interpreted to the effect that "restricted" always meant impoverished and "elaborate" meant more highly developed, mature, or even gifted. Clarifications to this effect were not long in coming. The crucial point here is obviously the emphasis on the sharing of experiences, with the result that upper middle class spouses or siblings would often use--because of their equally large amount of mutually shared experience--the restricted code, just as a member of the lower socioeconomic brackets would normally do. This notion is, without any doubt, an extremely valid one, as it associates the use of these verbal patterns with factors other than intelligence or intellectual capability, as has not been uncommon for certain educational researchers to suggest.

To approach an investigation of speech from the standpoint of the ethnographer, we obviously have to first lay some groundwork. I can envision such ethnographic research along three stages: (1) etic descriptions of speech communities, (2) emic revalidation of the earlier descriptions, and (3) correlation of communicative competences with the sociocultural patterns that have been recognized (Hymes 1974:11-12). It will probably take an anthropological linguist--or should I say, a linguistic anthropologist--to postpone the actual analysis of speech until the social matrix has fully been specified, but the value of the approach can hardly be questioned, especially if it is intended to validate the results of those who started at the other end. However, in view of the paucity of research conducted along ethnographic lines, we must first await the outcome of the work done by those who have set out to deal with sociolinguistic

taxonomy, which is the preliminary step before emic validation and correlation with communicative competences can actually take place.

The last perspective, the assessment of cross-cultural/cross-linguistic attitudes, must not be underestimated. Social psychologists like Lambert and his associates at McGill University and also educational psychologists like Williams, now at Southern California, have recognized the role that ethnic or cultural bias plays, not only in acquiring the other's language or dialect, but also in stereotyping an individual because of the language or dialect that he speaks. Labov (1972:213) expanded this strictly psychological perspective to render it more linguistically oriented by trying to identify the specific markers or indicators that have caused the bias to come into play in the first place. Whether looked upon from social psychology or linguistics, attitudinal factors should not be divorced from the more socially or linguistically oriented issues in order to also enter into the composite picture of "sociolinguistics."

The preceding comments do not pretend to identify all the areas of research in sociolinguistics but represent the most crucial ones, especially if we are focusing on their validity to settings other than those in which these investigations were carried out. It therefore seems to be appropriate, at this point, to specifically select the topics which, if isolated from the specifics concerning the situations in the Northeast of the United States and Canada, would have cross-national validity. I can think of at least five such topics which should constitute a significant area of sociolinguistic research, regardless of the location where it was implemented, i.e., the identification of vernaculars, the construction of variable rules and/or the charting of scalograms to specify ongoing

variation, the specification of stylistic changes and their potential range within the basilect-acrilect spectrum, the measuring of elaborate and restricted codes, not as a bipolar scale but rather as a multi-facted instrument where degrees of elaborateness and restrictedness can be recorded, and, finally, the delimitation of speech communities on the basis of social interaction between and among their members, including monocultural, bicultural, and pluricultural groups and their descriptions.

Superimposing the model on Texas. Although SKYLARK's concern is Texas English, or, at least, southwestern English, it is difficult to approach the language situation here without referring to the presence of languages other than English. Speaking about Texas English, we can no longer restrict ourselves to Anglo varieties but must include those varieties spoken by nonAnglo groups, which may exhibit a series of non-English features because of their members' acquisition of English as a second language. Let me digress a little from our exclusive concern for English and examine the bilingual continuum--in Stewart's sense, but adapted to the local situation--that allows the speaker of what I am calling the ethnic language to move, as far as Mexican-Americans are concerned, monolingually toward either Texas Spanish or else to Mexican-American English/American English <u>koine</u>. Alternatively, he may move bilingually toward both. Rather than having a basilect at one extreme and an acrilect at the other, I am suggesting that the basilect here may be thought of as occupying the central portion of the continuum, whether it exhibits Spanish dominance, Spanish-English balance or English dominance within the mixed language (see fig. 1). Depending upon educational goals and factors holding sociocultural implications, the speaker may go beyond Texas Spanish and/or Mexican-

American English and become proficient in a less regionally restricted variety of Spanish or a less ethnically marked variety of English.

There is little question that individuals who are bilingual participate in two cultures. It becomes interesting to speculate whether the individual who, in search of total acculturation, has lost his native language, has actually succeeded in shedding his earlier cultural identity also. I do not think so. The Mexican-American who no longer speaks Spanish still fits into the cultural matrix of his own ethnic group, just as is true for the American Indian who, at least in the Northeast, has lost his tribal language but has retained the cultural traits that make it either unrewarding or difficult for him to function in the White society.

The nonAnglo in Texas who thus participates in two cultures but speaks only English may speak either an American English koine, devoid of any substratum interference, or may, in addition to the latter, speak a variety of Mexican-American English, Black English vernacular, German English, etc., such that, if he so wishes, he can make bidialectal shifts as the situation suggests.

The English-only Anglo, on the other hand, is obviously monocultural and monolingual, although he may have in his repertoire more than one English dialect, a koine or only slightly regionally restricted variety, and also a more heavily marked regional one that he may have spoken during his childhood and that he has retained for appropriate interaction with individuals, kin or peers, from his home town. Whether Anglo or not, many Texans seem to share, in their use of English, a common koine, however their cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ in significant ways, a fact that makes the overall picture exceedingly complex. Only a fine-

meshed sociolinguistic framework is likely to succeed in organizing this diversity.

Priorities in southwestern sociolinguistics. It now seems to be appropriate to pull together my various comments and try to incorporate them in a table of priorities whose implementation I am here suggesting. In doing so, I am not implying that no significant research has so far been carried out in southwestern sociolinguistics. Quite to the contrary: the work of Jacob Ornstein, Bates Hoffer, Chester Christian, Garland Bills, Joseph Michel, and many others shows the concern of southwestern scholars for many of the problems to which I have here referred. However, I believe that, if we take advantage of the expertise developed by others in their study of the cultural and linguistic behaviors of other ethnic groups, we are likely to advance much faster than we otherwise could. Our first priority should therefore be an indepth study of the various sociolinguistic perspectives investigated elsewhere, although almost none of that research concerns the area in which we live. I share, at least to some extent, Ornstein's disappointment in this respect but, on the other hand, I believe that Wolfram was right when, responding to Jack Ornstein's concern (Ornstein 1972:91), he suggested that we do something about it to correct the shortcoming.

The indepth study to which I referred above should allow us to determine which of these perspectives or tracks are universal enough to apply to situations other than those for which they were originally intended. For want of a better term, I call these universally relevant features pandialectal elements. The identification of such elements should be our

second priority. In view of the volume of sociolinguistic studies during the last decade and in order to avoid any duplication in the implementation of the first two priorities, we might wish to distribute among ourselves the various fields of universal relevance and agree upon reporting on our findings in the near future. The results of these investigations should allow us to construct a model that could become the framework for the study of, if not all sociolinguistic situations in the country, at least those situations that are most relevant to Texas and the Southwest. The construction of a pandialectal model, our third priority, could and is expected to trigger a host of research activities that are highly structured, well balanced, and widely distributed so as to compensate for the delay which we all experienced in the past.

It is difficult to predict, at a point when such a model does not yet exist, what the application of the model to specific settings in Texas might achieve and what particular topics might emerge as worthwhile projects of sociolinguistic research. One could, however, speculate on the general nature of such topics on the basis of what he intuitively feels should be investigated. As a matter of fact, we might wish to know far more about the following issues:

(1) the identification of vernaculars,
(2) the nature of stylistic shifting,
(3) the description of specific speech communities,
(4) the description of variability features, whether English or Spanish, by means of variable rules and/or implicational scales, and
(5) the presence of biases in cross-cultural relations.

These and many other such issues are likely to emerge after the model has been applied to regional settings here and elsewhere in the Southwest.

Before concluding, let me attempt to focus more directly on southwestern English and list a number of questions which by now must be in everybody's mind and to which coordinated research might address itself in the attempt to better understand the role of English in a multicultural and multilingual setting:

(1) What is the inventory of nonEnglish elements in Texas English?
(2) How many nonstandard varieties can we account for?
(3) Why is a koine acquired by only some of the speakers?
(4) What is the general attitude to this koine as opposed to the various degrees of regionally flavored standards?
(5) Which substratum interferences to English can we identify?
(6) To what extent do minority politics affect English language goals?
(7) How is the expansion of bilingual education going to affect, if at all, degrees of English proficiency?

These and many more questions along the same lines could be answered if systematic work in sociolinguistics were to be undertaken. The breadth of the research here would ultimately depend upon the extent to which we were willing to apply the insights gained elsewhere to the situation in Texas and also upon the number of researchers who would seek, systematically, to find the answers to these and many other related questions. In other words, our progress in southwestern sociolinguistics will largely depend on the coordinated, systematic, and scholarly efforts of professionals like you and me.

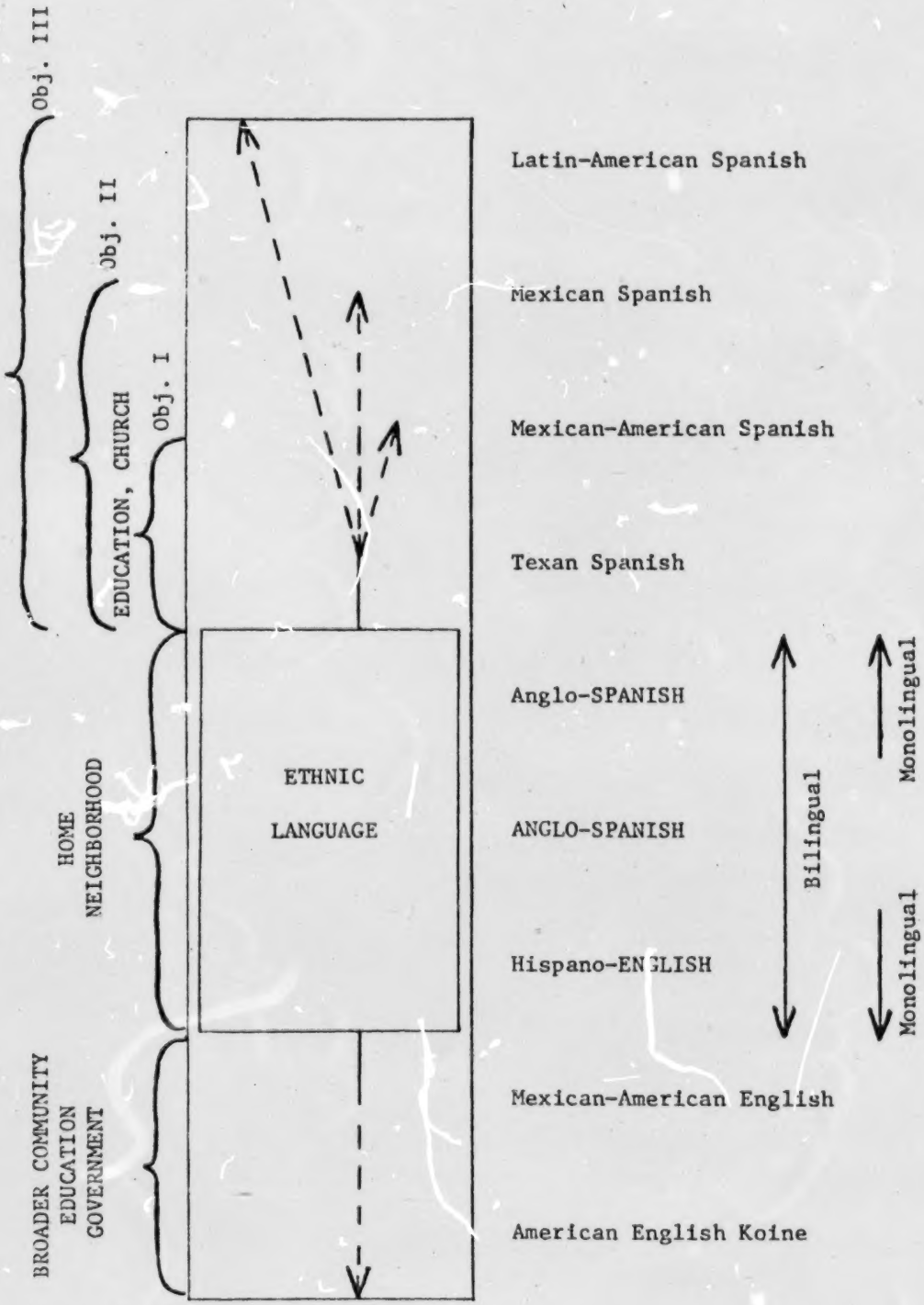


Figure 1

The Spanish-English Bilingual Continuum (Texas)

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